



**CIVIC LEARNING AND DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN**  
Winona State University  
American Democracy Project

## **OVERVIEW**

As a committee of the Winona State University Faculty Association, the American Democracy Project (ADP), is comprised of faculty across colleges, departments and disciplines and resides in the Division of Academic Affairs. The committee elects from its membership the Campus Coordinator for the American Democracy Project, with leadership and support from the Office of the Provost for Academic Affairs. Additional leadership and support is routinely found in the College of Liberal Arts, and specifically the Department of Political Science/Public Administration. Through internal and external relationships, and in coordination with the Learning and Community Engagement (LACE) committee, civic learning and democratic engagement are hosted with students and student engagement at the core. The strong relationship with Student Senate and student leaders drives the focus and success in WSU's work in voter registration and turnout in 2014, 2016, and 2018. Coordinated and collaborated efforts are also found in ongoing work in democratic deliberation and other ADP and Campus Compact initiatives.

### **National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement**

Since its inaugural call of participants in 2013, Winona State University is a committed member of the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) studies through Tufts University. WSU's reports reflect the exceptional voter registration rates and turnout since the 2012 election.

### **VOTER REGISTRATION, EDUCATION, ACCESS, AND TURNOUT**

Working as a flagship partner with National Voter Registration Day (NVRD), the WSU community registers hundreds of voters every Fall around National Voter Registration Day. In 2015, a primary election year, over 300 students were registered to vote. Our involvement in NVRD has been extremely rewarding. In 2016, we applied and received the status of a "Flagship" partner with NVRD to coordinate and lead on a national scale our events to promote and register over 1000 students and the like.

As in the past, ADP rallied students oncampus to register the university community, surpassing our goal in 2015 (midterm election) of 800 voters. In doing so, we continue to work with partner organizations such as the AAUW, League of Women Voters, the College Democrats, College Republicans, WSU Student Senate, and the MN Secretary of State's Office. Combined with the

Lyceum talk, the Lyceum committee becomes a major resource and source of support for NVRD.

In anticipation of NVRD and the Fall 2016 presidential election, ADP proposed and received a University Lyceum speaker, Lawrence Jacobs, to give an all-university address the evening of NVRD. This proposal was fully funded and the day of registration for NVRD culminated in this reception (WSU boat on Mississippi River) and talk on our efforts. Dr. Lawrence C. Jacobs shared his research and analysis on, “The Extraordinary Election of 2016 and its ordinary explanations,” which included classroom visits, a classroom session on WSU’s floating classroom, the Cal Fremling riverboard on the Mississippi River, with elected officials, and the WSU Krueger Library Athenaeum. The voter education Athenaeum is archived in a podcast, “Politics and Elections with Dr. Larry Jacobs” at <https://soundcloud.com/wsukruegerlibrary/episode3>

Besides NVRD events and the Lyceum speaker, the WSU Krueger Library is remodeling with open and public space to include voter guides and information. In addition digital signage through the numerous screens around campus used. As in the efforts for the GOTV during the Minnesota caucus nights, the digital signage proved to be highly successful by the long lines and large participation rates at the local DFL (Democratic) and Republican caucus sites.

Candidate forums were frequently on-campus and through the League of Women Voters where Winona State University continues to be a partner institution in moderation of the forums, participation on the forum panels, and as volunteers during the forums. The following are already scheduled in collaboration with the League of Women Voters-Winona, where the WSU American Democracy Project has served as a sponsor since 2008. Candidate forums were held for all federal-state-local offices. There were two primary election candidate forums and seven general election candidate forums scheduled to provide public access and voice to the plethora of candidates running for office at all levels of government. WSU faculty, staff, and students not only attended many of the forums but also volunteered in facilitating the forums. This partnership provides an important and necessary opportunity for the development of political engagement and efficacy beyond presidential and national elections.

ADP recruited a dozen partner organizations and groups to recruit over 90 volunteers to register 1,190 voters. In 2015, we had ongoing three voter registration sites on-campus. In 2016, we established five voter registration centers in conjunction with Constitution Day, National Voter Registration Day and into Election Day. Our efforts were to make political engagement sustainable and part of the institutional culture. We did not want political engagement to be as George Mehaffy says “celebratory” and/or “episodic” but sustained, intentional, and institutionalized (AASCU). The entire university and Winona community attended the Lyceum talk and candidates and political leaders invited to the Mississippi River event reception.

The state of Minnesota has Election Day Registration (EDS) and as a “consequence” often shares the lead in national voter registration and turnout by eliminating the burdensome transaction costs in two-stage process. Ballot access is guaranteed for our university community by having a central voting location hosted in Kryzsko Commons, the student activities union, and working

with WSU Housing and Residential Life to include the list of oncampus living students to facilitate the EDR and voting process.

The focus continues to be expanding oncampus residents on the West Campus and in WSU-Rochester, where the polling site is not centrally located on campus, but requires a short walk to the neighboring firehouse. For those students living off-campus, further digital and tangible signage will be printed and used through student communications (Student Senate) and university communications (ADP) for voting locations and access. Signage will be used before and during Election Day to direct and encourage students, faculty, and staff.

Digital signage, physical signage, with polling maps, were located in the WSU Krueger and Kryzsko Commons, the student union, and online through the university webpage. Many of these efforts were highlighted in these news releases: <http://news.winona.edu/5987/national-voter-registration-day/> and <http://news.winona.edu/9089/american-democracy-project-continues-outreach/>

In 2016 WSU won the coveted Ballot Bowl in the category of “the four-year Minnesota State University campus that registered the largest number of students and the largest percentage of its student body, [Winona State University] which registered 1,861 students, or 24 percent of its student body.” In fact, WSU not only won its category but out registered most other institutions in the state:

Minnesota State Universities

<b>Campus</b>	<b>Registrations</b>	<b>Estimated % Registered</b>
Winona State	1,861	24%
Minnesota State Mankato	625	5%
St. Cloud State	537	5%
Minnesota State Moorhead	420	8%
Southwest State	237	10%
Bemidji State	200	4%
Metropolitan State	20	>1%

Private colleges and universities\*

<b>Campus</b>	<b>Registrations</b>	<b>Estimated % Registered</b>
Gustavus Adolphus	1,318	63%
Concordia Moorhead	784	39%
Hamline	614	16%
Carleton	506	27%
St. Scholastica	348	8%

Saint Mary's	306	6%
St. Olaf	200	7%
Macalester	182	8%
Augsburg	155	4%
St. Thomas	115	1%
Bethany Lutheran	88	18%
Bethel	78	3%

\*College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University and Saint Catherine University registered students to vote but did not tally their results.

University of Minnesota Campuses\*

<b>Campus</b>	<b>Registrations</b>	<b>Estimated % Registered</b>
Twin Cities	8,417	21%
Duluth	1,939	20%
Rochester	113	23%

\*UM Morris registered students to vote but did not tally their results.

With the Office of the President’s encouragement and support, WSU is scheduled to defend its title in 2018 Through the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State, Steve Simon, “College campuses are hubs of democracy, activism, and civic engagement. Part of what makes Minnesota so special is our statewide dedication to civic engagement. Your work in 2016 registering, educating, and encouraging young people to become voters was a model of the energy and dedication that made Minnesota best in the nation in voter turnout. In 2018, we strive to continue to lead the country. Be a part of what makes our state a national leader – participate in the 2018 Minnesota College Ballot Bowl and have some fun while doing your part to increase voter registration and participation in Minnesota.”

We plan our continued voter registration, education, access and turnout enthusiasm this Fall in 2018. The American Democracy Project is committed to encourage GOTV through traditional GOTV activities through door-knocking, chalking, free food/snacks, and giveaways. These activities are created and implemented by the students for the students, so voting becomes the norm, the expected, and the trend. In the city of Winona, Ward 3, concentrated to oncampus residential students, experienced a turnout of 90.7%, with the state of Minnesota achieving the highest turnout of the state. However 2016 turnout of all WSU students was much lower. With strong voter registration numbers, it is not surprising that our turnout is lower than expected in 2016 at 53%, down 5.3 percent from 2012. Voter registration and turnout still remain above the institutional average reported in NSLVE reports, however it is a disappointing voter turnout decline. While this may suggest overall trends of turnout in 2016, it is hardly something to celebrate and will be addressed in 2018. However voting behavior should be compared across

midterm elections 2012-2016 and 2014-2018. In the 2014 midterm, WSU student voter turnout was a dismal 19%. This midterm voting decline reflects voting behavior's predicted surge and decline. Regardless, the 30% drop in voter turnout in midterm elections is something to address and reverse in 2018, at least in narrowing the deficit. Certainly the NSVLE reports reveal data on student turnout by college and major. Clearly our focus needs to move towards the College of Nursing and the College of Science and Engineering, however the 2016 data by major or area of study is far more complete and representative. The lower 50% voter turnout reported in 2016 may indeed be more accurate and realistic. Consequently in 2018 we will work on collecting reliable voting data with a focus on the work introduced by Abby Kiesa, Director of Impact at CIRCLE, Tufts University, on "civic deserts." WSU shared in her introduction of civic deserts at #CLDE17 and Kiesa's framework is helpful in moving forward in 2018.

## **GOALS, STRATEGIES, AND OUTCOMES FOR 2018**

- WSU ADP will continue intensive and extensive efforts and focus on voter registration, education, access, and turnout through its commitment to National Voter Registration Day, the Ballot Bowl, and the collection of NSLVE data. Efforts have begun to improve and intensify ADP's relationship with Residence Life. Beginning this summer and in Orientation Week activities, civic engagement will be a common theme in the training of resident advisors and in welcoming new (and returning) student to campus in the Fall.
- WSU ADP continues its work in celebration Constitution Day by participating in the Minnesota Campus Compact's (MCC), "*We the People*" *Constitution Day of Deliberation* in September 2018. WSU has applied for a MCC mini-grant to host a democratic deliberation on immigration using the National Issue Forum (NIF) issue guide, "Coming to America: Who Should We Welcome, What Should We Do?" Using students as trained moderators, the community wide event focuses on the core commitments of higher education, "taking seriously the perspectives of others," and "educating for personal and social responsibility." This assists The WSU Commission on Academic Freedom and Free Speech (CAFFS) in creating a more civil and civic environment. WSU ADP will also administer Danielle Allen's American Values Survey from MN Campus Compact, and plans to distribute copies of Allen's *Our Declaration* text on campus. These efforts contribute to the growing focus on increasing civility, civic discourse, and democratic deliberation on campus. In student affairs, the Warrior Debates continue to tackle wicked problems, with the ADP Campus Coordinator as a central organizing and facilitator of these difficult discussions. In the past, the Warrior Debates focus on protest during the National Anthem, gun control, and dysfunctional politics.
- In 2017-18 WSU ADP hosted a democratic deliberation for MNLead, the student organization for community colleges in the state of Minnesota. As a result, the Director of MNLead and the Minnesota State Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Ron Anderson, formed a civic engagement working group under the leadership of Brent Glass, Minnesota State Associate Vice-Chancellor for Student Affairs. The WSU ADP campus coordinator was a member of the working group, which produced, *Strengthening Minnesota's Culture of Civic Engagement: A guide of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities to discuss ways to improve civic life*. Besides enrolling all 54 Minnesota system campuses in the NSLVE, it seek to move forward in supporting civic engagement

and education at the system level. WSU will continue to work very closely by presenting its NSLVE reports and best practices upcoming at the ASA conference in June 2018 and Democracy in Action Summit in August 2018.

- WSU ADP is a pilot institution for the Public Work Academy, launching Fall 2018 by Harry C. Boyte and the Sabo Center at Augsburg University. In working across institutions and in small cities, the goal is to revitalize public work and empower citizen professionals. The inaugural meeting is scheduled for June 28, 2018.

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